



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

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Draft Recovery Plan for Rota Bridled White-eye Released for Public Review

A draft recovery plan outlining the recovery strategy for the endangered Rota bridled white-eye was released for public comment today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Rota bridled white-eye, known as Nosa Luta in Chamorro, is a small forest bird with a distinctive ring of white feathers around its eyes and exists only on the island of Rota in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

“We encourage public input for this draft plan to ensure that the final recovery plan provides us with the necessary guidance to increase Rota bridled white-eye numbers and work toward the recovery of this endemic species,” said Patrick Leonard, field supervisor for the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office. “Although white-eyes are found elsewhere in the Mariana Islands, each species is unique and important to protect.”

The primary goals of the draft recovery plan are to stop further declines in the range of the Rota bridled white-eye population, develop safeguards to prevent the species from going extinct, and reverse population declines so that population levels estimated in 1982 (10,000 individuals) are reached.

Recovery goals will be obtained by the successful implementation of recovery actions. Recovery actions are designed to address the various threats to the species and focus on:

- reducing predation by introduced species such as rats and black drongos (a bird species from Taiwan),
- preventing the establishment of new predators and avian diseases such as the brown treesnake and West Nile virus,
- reducing habitat destruction and degradation by protecting and restoring native forests within the range of the Rota bridled white-eye, and
- evaluating the need for establishing a second wild population due to the species’ restricted range and small population size, making it susceptible to random catastrophic events, like typhoons.

An outreach program will also be established to increase public support for, and involvement in, the conservation of the Rota bridled white-eye.

The Rota bridled white-eye is a small (approximately 4 inches in size) yellowish bird with a yellow-orange bill, legs, and feet. Average weight of the bird is about one-third of an ounce. The species feeds primarily on insects and often is found in small flocks of five to seven birds. Related species include the Guam bridled white-eye, which is believed to be extinct, and the Saipan bridled white-eye, which is relatively abundant on Saipan, Tinian, and Aguiguan.

Since 1982, the Rota bridled white-eye population has declined by 90 percent, with current estimates numbering approximately 1,092 birds. The decline of the species is believed to be caused by degradation or loss of habitat due to development, agricultural activities, naturally occurring events such as typhoons, and predation by black drongos (an introduced bird) and rats. Once numerous and found at low elevations on the island, current populations are concentrated in approximately 630 acres of forest above 490 feet elevation in the Sabana region of Rota. The Rota bridled white-eye was listed as endangered on January 22, 2004.

The availability of the draft recovery plan for a 60-day public comment period was announced in the Federal Register on September 19, 2006. Copies of the draft recovery plan are available through the Fish and Wildlife Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/pacificislands> or by calling the Fish and Wildlife Service's Honolulu office at 808 792 9400. Comments on the draft recovery plan must be received on or before November 20, 2006 to Patrick Leonard, Field Supervisor, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.